

## **Art crime – the hunt after thieves and treasures**

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Since the antiquity, tomb raiders dig after valuable treasures to sell them.

In the 90ties, due to the finding of photos in the glovebox of a vehicle involved in an accident, it was possible to catch a ring of professional organized tomb raiders and salesmen. They dug and dealt with vases robbed out of different Etruscan necropolis or pieces of wall painting from an unknown Villa of Pompeii. The buyers ranged from private collectors to a curator an of well-known museum.

To name only some examples, which are documented through photographs like a salesman, who sold Egyptian mummies at the wayside in Egypt, or a sheet with an organigram of the ring. The organigram was found in the flat of the accident victim. In both cases, the robbed places themselves often weren't documented.

Nowadays, through Satellite pictures like used by Google Earth it's possible not only to discover Heritage sites like the extent of Angkor Wat, but also to monitor pot digging at heritage sites (also isolated ones) over years.

Besides pot digging also art theft in museums is an important part of art crime. Equally, if the objects are robbed in peaceful times or during looted during war.

Here are for example important questions: How can new technologies be helpful to track robbed cultural objects? Could, for example, the Lost Art-Database or the Art Loss Register be combined with machine learning to automatically match objects which are offered at the illicit art trade? How can new technologies support in a more effective way?

We are looking forward to getting answers to these questions and an overview of the state-of-the-art. But last and not least (hopefully ongoing) development of methods to preserve cultural heritage for the next generation.

***#artcrime #newtechnologies #potdig #monitoring #arttheft***